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**NUTRITION**

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**Nutrition Services of the American Red Cross**

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The purpose of the Federal Interagency Committee on Nutrition Education (ICNE) is "to better understand the goals of member agencies and their nutrition-related programs; to stimulate efforts to improve the well-being of people through nutrition education and other activities." The function of *Nutrition Program News* is to share information on current developments, pertinent research, and education in nutrition.

ICNE is composed of representatives from those government and quasi-government agencies that have nutrition programs. Representatives from the American National Red Cross, a quasi-government agency, are members of ICNE.

Nutrition activities of the American National Red Cross will be featured in this issue of *Nutrition Program News*. We will discuss the various programs of the agency with particular interest in the food and nutrition services provided.

## THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS

The American Red Cross was authorized by Congressional Charter in 1905 to carry out the obligations assumed by the United States Government under certain international treaties known as the Geneva or Red Cross Conventions. Specifically, the Red Cross acts as the medium of voluntary relief and communication between the American people and their armed forces, and carries on a system of national and international relief to prevent and mitigate suffering caused by disasters.

In the event of a disaster, the Federal Government's Office of Emergency Preparedness coordinates the activities of all government agencies, including the Red Cross. Red

Cross is responsible for coordinating the activities of all volunteer agencies with each other and with government agencies. This coordination among the various agencies functions not only in times of short-term disaster, but also in ongoing community projects designed to alleviate suffering in persistent local disaster areas.

The Red Cross is thus in a unique position to view the programs of all active groups and to help prevent costly and time-consuming duplications of services.

## RED CROSS PROGRAMS

A number of the programs developed and executed by Red Cross have a nutrition component. This component varies from providing meals or snacks in times of disaster to presenting detailed nutrition information in formal class situations. Most of the services of the Red Cross are provided by volunteers, aided and directed by local, area, and headquarters Red Cross personnel.

### Disaster Relief Program

Each Red Cross chapter is expected to maintain a voluntary disaster organization that is capable of meeting the anticipated needs of the chapter area. History and current conditions make it possible for each chapter to anticipate the problems that are likely to occur. Local chapters may employ permanent staff members who support the volunteers in efforts to meet emergency situations.

Food service is an important part of the disaster relief program. The object of disaster food service is to get food to the victims as soon as possible. The manner of delivery and service of the snacks or meals varies with the particular situation.

**Mobile food.**—Food items or full meals are placed on mobile units and delivered to individuals in a disaster area. Mobile service enables rescuers to remain at their work and victims to remain in the vicinity thus avoiding potentially alarming or upsetting removal of people to a new location.

We are indebted to Mrs. Margaret C. Dean, R.D., Food and Nutrition Consultant, American National Red Cross, for providing a wealth of information and generous consultant help in the development of this article.

**Fixed or shelter feeding.**—Meals and between meal snacks are served in a fixed location such as a school, church, or armory. Cafeteria service is established so large numbers of people can be served. Red Cross sometimes transports people to the food service area. If no fixed shelter is available, or if removal of victims to a new area is inadvisable, Red Cross may request the use of army or national forestry field kitchens. If only a few people are in need, food service is offered at a motel or similar business establishment.

**Drop food.**—Food is delivered by helicopter to individuals isolated by a flood or other disaster. Evacuation of the people follows as soon as possible.

### **Emergency preparedness for food service**

The Red Cross is currently investigating ways to improve their emergency services in order to be able to satisfy food, clothing, and shelter needs more rapidly during disaster situations. Food service requires a great deal of preplanning if it is to function rapidly and efficiently in times of need.

### **Pilot workshops for disaster feeding**

The United States Department of Agriculture, in 1970, requested Red Cross assistance in training volunteers to effectively use USDA donated foods that are distributed for disaster feeding. In the same year, the midwestern area Red Cross Disaster Services asked the Food and Nutrition Consultant at National Red Cross Headquarters to direct a workshop on disaster preparedness in food service.

As a result of these two inquiries, "pilot feeding" workshops, designed to improve food service during disaster situations, were organized in each of the four geographical areas of Red Cross.

**Participants.**—Each local Red Cross chapter selected its participants. Representatives from the following were included:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Office of Civil Defense
- Fire department
- Police
- Red Cross directors of services and programs
- Red Cross field directors and volunteers
- Head Start
- Community Action programs
- Other Office of Economic Opportunity programs
- Home economics extension agents
- Nutrition and health aides
- Nutritionists
- Dietitians and dietetic interns
- Hotels, restaurants, and airlines
- School lunch executives, supervisors, and workers
- State and local health departments

- College professors and students
- Commercial food suppliers

**U.S. Department of Agriculture involvement.**—USDA and headquarters Red Cross personnel coordinated and organized the workshops with the assistance of area Red Cross disaster directors.

The USDA supplied food for the program, and Federal, State, and local personnel assisted in the workshop program. The procedures to follow in order to obtain USDA donated foods for disaster victims were outlined. The particular foods available through donated food programs were listed and displayed. Recipes and menus incorporating these foods were distributed and discussed.

**Simulated disaster situation.**—A simulated emergency situation was presented. Participants were requested to prepare a meal for the stated number of victims from donated foods and other available supplies.

With the training and information recently given them, the participants were able to efficiently and quickly produce a meal. Health officials observed the preparation procedures and recommended desirable and important sanitary procedures.

**Value of workshop.**—These workshops provided an opportunity for local community involvement in a cooperative feeding exercise. The emphasis was on emergency and disaster procedures. People from many agencies worked together to satisfy a common desire to prepare to help those in need. It may be possible for Red Cross to coordinate similar groups for nutrition education and related nutrition programs.

**Additional food service workshops.**—The Red Cross and United States Department of Agriculture judged the pilot feeding programs a success and recommended that similar workshops be held in locations that are subject to floods, tornados, hurricanes, or earthquakes. Volunteers in those areas would then be better prepared to provide disaster food service.

### **Red Cross classes**

Prior to 1952, Red Cross had a national nutrition program. Courses for dietary aides and food and nutrition courses were taught by Red Cross volunteers across the country.

Since 1952, there has not been a separate Red Cross national nutrition program. However, nutrition education has been incorporated into three current nursing program courses: Home Nursing, Mother and Baby Care, and Mother's Aide. These courses are taught by Red Cross volunteers in local chapters. Each course includes a discussion of basic nutrition which would ideally be taught



by a nutritionist but more frequently is taught by the instructor who handles the rest of the course.

**Home Nursing.**—The course's session in maintaining health includes a discussion of well-balanced diets and the role of the four food groups in developing adequate diets. The sources and functions of various nutrients are discussed and information is given on the enrichment and fortification of foods.

**Mother and Baby Care.**—This course offers a discussion of the benefits of an adequate, balanced diet to the pregnant woman and her unborn child. It covers four food groups and individual nutrients as they relate to increased needs during pregnancy and lactation. Course instructors encourage the students to discuss their nutritional concerns and diet habits in class.

**Mother's Aide.**—This course is designed for upper elementary and junior high students who may be responsible for the care of young children. It acquaints the student with the composition of a well-balanced diet. Diets for preschool children are presented, and suitable serving sizes are suggested. Desirable sanitary procedures for food preparation are discussed.

## **Migrant workers in Florida**

The Red Cross has had the opportunity to coordinate the activities of various government and voluntary agencies in their joint concern to reduce the plight of migrant workers in southern Florida.

In March 1971, the Federal government declared a disaster for the migrant workers in that area. Only two parts of the disaster act were enacted—unemployment compensation and distribution of food.

**Food Distribution.**—Distribution of food was the primary concern of the Department of Agriculture. Red Cross assistance was requested, and volunteers provided mobile feeding units and first aid unit stations at the distribution centers. Bilingual nutrition aides and migrant worker homemakers were on hand to aid the migrants in their selection of foods. Recipients were free to select or reject any of the USDA donated foods or fresh produce made available to them. Volunteers demonstrated uses of donated foods and distributed Spanish and English recipes incorporating the foods.

**Course Development.**—Prior to the declaration of a disaster, nurses from the South Florida Division nursing programs had been working in the migrant camps. They asked the Red Cross Food and Nutrition Consultant to help them develop meaningful programs for the migrants.

Basic health education was urgently needed as health courses or nutrition courses routinely offered by Red Cross

nursing programs were not acceptable or meaningful to the migrants. Education was necessary in child care, food selection, food preparation, handling and storage of food, care of clothing, and sanitation. Brief, simple courses offering only the most basic and essential information are being developed, and bilingual extension service aides are available to present the course material to the migrants.

The involvement of the migrants in the determination of the needed information and in the development of the program is being sought and encouraged. Red Cross met with representatives from United Fund agencies to discuss coordinating efforts for course development. These courses could be adapted for use in migrant camps located in other areas.

## **Service to military families**

The Red Cross offers many services to members of the armed forces, among them counseling service on desirable food purchase practices. A family food budget, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics food prices and USDA food plans, has been developed and is used by chapter workers as a guide in estimating food costs for families and individuals. Eligible military families are frequently encouraged by the Red Cross to participate in USDA food programs. The Red Cross occasionally refers individuals to Food Distribution or Food Stamp Programs and helps them establish eligibility.

## **Meals-on-wheels**

In communities throughout the country local Red Cross chapters cooperate with health and service agencies to provide home-delivered, nutritionally sound, fully cooked meals. The particular program varies with the needs of the community.

Individuals are referred to the meals-on-wheels program by a doctor or a social service or health agency. Community nutritionists confer with the Red Cross on the composition of the meals. Red Cross volunteers prepare the meals in the chapter building or a suitable alternate and deliver them to the individual homes in Red Cross mobile-meals vehicles. The service enables many individuals who are incapable of adequately preparing their own meals to be at home instead of in a hospital or nursing home.

This program is an excellent way of coordinating community resources for a worthwhile project.

## **Red Cross youth**

The American Red Cross publishes two monthly magazines directed toward young people: *American Junior Red Cross News* for elementary school children, and the *American Red Cross Youth Journal* for secondary school

students. Both magazines on occasion carry articles promoting good food habits and explaining the importance of nutrition to the development and functioning of the human body and mind. Health charts and other materials are developed as teacher aides.

Red Cross promotes health and safety through First Aid and Swimming courses. These courses are designed for all age levels and socioeconomic groups.

### International Red Cross

Red Cross organizations in 112 nations are active in the International Red Cross. American National Red Cross has a relief coordinator at the League Headquarters in Geneva. Food, clothing, medical supplies, money, and personnel are contributed by the American Red Cross to help relieve human sufferings in other parts of the world.

### CONCLUSION

Red Cross service programs having a food and nutrition component include disaster feeding, health and nutrition course work, special programs for migrants, service to military families, meals-on-wheels, and Red Cross youth. Each of these programs helps maintain or improve the nutritional well being of the people. The Red Cross, through cooperation and coordination with other agencies, has an opportunity to offer continuous health and nutrition aid to disadvantaged Americans in addition to short-term disaster aid to all in need.

### MATERIALS

Listing of these materials is for the information of readers and does not necessarily mean a recommendation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Materials or information may be obtained from the addresses given. Symbols refer to:

GPO—Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

INF—Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

### Food and Nutrition

**Family Fare—A Guide to Good Nutrition.** Home and Garden Bulletin No. 1. U.S. Department of Agriculture. GPO 45 cents. Single copies free, INF.

**Food Guide for Older Folks.** Home and Garden Bulletin No. 17. U.S. Department of Agriculture. GPO 10 cents. Single copies free, INF.

**Your Money's Worth in Foods.** Home and Garden Bulletin No. 183. U.S. Department of Agriculture. GPO 25 cents. Single copies free, INF.

### Food Consumption

**Nutritional Review.** Reprinted from the "National Food Situation," November 1970, and "A Table of Food Composition Per Capita for 1947-49, 1957-59, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, and 1970." 8 pages. CFE (Adm.) 229-5, January 1971. USDA. Available from Consumer and Food Economics Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Single copies free.

### Applied Nutrition

**Yummy Rummy,** a nutrition education game for 5 to 12 year olds. Developed by Food Service Consultants of the American School Food Service Association. Available from the American School Food Service Association, 4101 E. Iliff Avenue, Denver, Colo. 80222. Price \$1.25 each. Reduced prices with quantity orders.

**An Annotated International Bibliography of Nutrition Education.** Compiled and edited by Clara Mae Taylor and Katherine P. Riddle. Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University. 1971. Cloth \$7.95; paper \$3.25.

### NATIONAL NUTRITION EDUCATION CONFERENCE

This conference will be held in Washington, D.C., on November 2 and 4, 1971. Representatives from all segments of the field of nutrition education have been invited to discuss the conference's theme: The American Teenager—his values, life style, eating habits, and health.

Of particular interest to the conferees will be discussions on how to reach teenagers with nutrition education so that they will develop and practice sound eating habits.

We will present the highlights of this conference in future issues of Nutrition Program News.